

## Opening university doors to all

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By John Garamendi

ONE hundred years ago this month, my grandfather, Jose Santorino Garamendi of Ispaster, Spain, set foot on Ellis Island, carrying with him little more than his dreams. But like so many millions of immigrants who left their homelands behind to start a new life in America, my grandfather's dreams were not of his own wealth or good fortune. Instead, he persevered through many struggles - facing discrimination, learning a new language, living on the rugged frontier - with the dream that someday his children would reap the bounty of our great country, even if he did not.

Making his way West to California, my grandfather worked at many jobs. But his proudest achievements were not his own. He took the most pride in the accomplishments of his two children - who each went to college, started their own families, and pursued their own dreams.

Now, as I look at my own 9 grandchildren, I am saddened to think that many young people of their generation may look ahead to the future without seeing the opportunities my grandfather saw as a young immigrant, or that I saw as a young person. For the first time in our history, we risk leaving future generations with fewer options than their parents had - and with less optimism about the future.

Today, in the halls of our state capitol, our children's future, and our grandchildren's potential is being debated.

Already in Los Angeles, as many as 50 percent of our young people disappear from our high schools.

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With \$4.3 billion in proposed budget cuts for California K-12 schools, how many more children will be lost?

With the price of college skyrocketing out of sight, and a proposed budget which includes \$1.1 billion in cuts for higher education and additional tax hikes on our students, how many young people will give up their hopes of college because it's unaffordable?

We can't sacrifice a generation of young people by putting their dreams too far out of reach. What is California, if not the state where our children believe that anything is possible?

It was with a bold but simple notion - that California could, and should invest in its future - that California built the best free public university system in the world, and an advanced transportation and water system that made our state an economic powerhouse over the past 50 years.

As the state budget is debated, we in California must make a critical decision - whether to continue to invest in our future or to abandon the historical commitment to public investment

that built the Golden State. We cannot abandon our responsibility to future generations. We must increase our investment in public education and at the same time implement serious reforms to dramatically improve the quality of public education.

If even one young person drops out of high school because they don't see the opportunities for their future, we all will suffer from their loss of potential. If the doors of college are closed on a single young person, we will all be deprived of their intellectual and economic opportunity.

That is why, in my role as a University of California Regent and a California State University Trustee, I've been at the forefront of the fight to keep our public colleges and universities affordable.

And I have been honored to join our students, faculty and staff as they take this issue to the streets or our state, and the halls of our state capitol. As the budget picture becomes clearer with the release of the May Revise this week, we will continue to make the case to Californians that education is the best investment we can make for our children's future and for the future of this great state.

John Garamendi is the lieutenant governor of California.